


THE WHITE HOUSE
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March 25, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR BUD KROGH

THROUGH: Al Haig--for information 

FROM: Hal Saunders

SUBJECT: Turkey's New Government and the Opium Problem

In response to your memos, I asked CIA to give us its reading on the new Turkish government's possible attitudes and capabilities in relation to the problem of further reducing the flow of illegal opium from Turkey. The main conclusions of the CIA analysts are:

--The new Prime Minister's immediate preoccupation will be to regain control of public order by suppressing political radicals. The opium licensing bill now awaiting parliamentary consideration and the organizational changes in the collection and enforcement agencies will necessarily have lower priorities for the moment.

--Nevertheless, these programs have already achieved a momentum of their own. If the more violent dissidents can be brought under control and calm restored to college campuses, there is nothing to prevent the opium control program from moving forward or even accelerating during the next few months.

--Conscious of being under the watchful eye of the military, Parliament may now move ahead on the opium bill with far less debate in the pre-voting phase than was usually the case while Demirel was in office and each move became hostage to opposition efforts to make life uncomfortable for him.

--The military will set priorities in Turkey for the foreseeable future and are the final arbiters, even if they choose to go on as they are now working through a parliamentary government. They are essentially uninformed on the international opium problem as it affects Turkey. They have taken no stand. As you know, President Sunay has been initiated into the problem and his influence with the present top military leaders remains strong.

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--Thus, the way is now open to convincing the military decision-makers of the urgency of the opium problem. We should encounter no particular pre-conceptions or resistance, although the generals will probably be more receptive if they expect some tangible return to Turkey for their cooperation.

--Little is known of Prime Minister Erim's personal attitude toward this problem. He is, however, an expert on international law, and his recognition of Turkey's need to live up to its commitments under the 1961 UN convention can be used to encourage his support. He is genuinely well disposed toward the U.S. His political base is secure, and he would probably be far less deterred from acting than was Demirel by charges of subservience to U.S. interests.

Our program thus falls now under three objectives, and I have noted below each what I have asked State to do in respect to it:

1. The most urgent aspect of the program is to improve the enforcement and control measures in order to achieve the complete collection of this year's crop. This is critical because an effective program for buying up production would provide "insurance" against failure of the government to make other desired moves toward licensing and eradication. It would also have more immediate impact. As you know, a program for doing this came out of Jim Parker's December visit to Turkey. At the same time, the Turkish Soil Products Office (TMO), which is responsible for buying up the crop, has developed a program for enlarging its organization and increasing the collection force in each of the seven provinces where poppies are now grown legally. All of this can be done in the absence of a licensing law under the previous law that sets up the system for declaring opium to be grown. This law contains enough teeth to permit the government of Turkey to be sure the farmer fills out an honest declaration and then to collect everything declared.

Action being taken: Ambassador Handley has been authorized to say that the US would meet the costs of this program. So far the Turks have acted as if they are prepared to handle these themselves. Unless BNDD sees technical deficiencies we can correct or further encouragement we can provide, this seems on the tracks.

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2. The objective of second and almost parallel immediacy is the passage by parliament of the licensing and control law. Ambassador Handley has already made some approaches to the military and key members of parliament, stressing the importance which we attach to the passage of this legislation. If it does not seem to be moving as we would like, Secretary Rogers will put it on the top of his agenda when he goes to Ankara on April 30 for the CENTO ministerial meeting.

Action being taken: In addition to the above, I have asked that Ambassador Handley submit a plan for impressing on the military, as well as on members of the new government, the international significance of this legislation and the importance to US-Turkish relations. This plan is due early next week.

3. The last action--chronologically--will be the approach we take to the Prime Minister's proclamation, legally required by June 30, on the number of provinces where planting will be permitted for the following year. You will recall that Demirel last June stated his intention in his announcement this June to reduce to four the number of provinces where poppy could legally be planted in the fall of 1971.

The main issue will be whether, as soon as the new government gets its feet on the ground in a couple of weeks, to make a major approach to the Prime Minister urging him to declare total eradication in his proclamation this June 30. The State Department informally feels that the best we could persuade him to do is to confirm planting in four provinces in this coming year, as Demirel had intended, and then announce reduction to one or two in the following year. If this were done, and if he followed up in his announcement in June 1972 of intent to reduce to zero the following June that would still permit the President to say before the 1972 conventions that Turkey had agreed to complete eradication, although there would still at that time be some production. Undoubtedly, however, there will be pressure here for a reduction to planting in no provinces in the announcement of this June.

Action being taken: I have asked State to begin drafting the instructions to Ambassador Handley on this approach. Unless there is unexpected agreement within our own ranks, I think this may well be the occasion for the next meeting of the Heroin Task Force, but let's see how the instructions develop.

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This leaves one question untouched: How to counter some of the more adverse publicity now developing on this problem. State is conducting a series of press and Hill briefings now. However, it seems to me that we really ought to gear ourselves to capitalize on some concrete move such as passage of the licensing bill. If that happens, then there should be a major effort to focus attention on that achievement.

If you have further thoughts on the above, please let me know.

Concurrence: A. Downey

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